

Yukon-Innoko Moose Planning News

Alaska Department of
Fish and Game

Issue 2, Fall 2005

Members of the Yukon-Innoko Moose Management Working Group are:

Bob Aloysius, Kalskag, Y-K Delta Regional Advisory Council

Ken Chase, Anvik, Chairman, GASH Advisory Committee

Arnold Hamilton, Shageluk Tribal Council, GASH Advisory Committee

Mike Hoffman, Bethel, non-local hunters

Carl Jerue, Jr., Anvik Tribal Council, GASH Advisory Committee

Bill Lyle, Wasilla, non-local hunters

Gabe Nicholai, Grayling Tribal Council, GASH Advisory Committee

Leroy Peters, Holy Cross Tribal Council, GASH Advisory Committee

Steve Powers, Bethel, guides and transporters

Andrew Stephanoff, Russian Mission, Lower Yukon Advisory Committee

Robert Walker, Anvik, Western Interior Regional Advisory Council

Gwen White, Willow, guides and transporters

Working Group Develops Recommendations for the Draft Yukon-Innoko Moose Management Plan

by Randy Rogers, ADF&G Wildlife Planner

A lot of progress has been made since the “Unit 21E Moose Planning News” was distributed in October 2004. Nominations for representatives to participate in a moose management working group were sought from fish and game advisory committees, federal subsistence councils, guides and transporters and others who hunt in Unit 21E. The resulting membership of the Working Group is shown in the column to the left.

The Working Group met in Grayling in January 2005, in Shageluk in April and in Anvik this July. All of these communities have shown wonderful hospitality and great involvement from elders, students and others.

In the January meeting the Working Group identified the need for more current moose population data. While ADF&G alone did not have the

resources to conduct a survey, Mike Smith, Director of Wildlife and Parks for Tanana Chiefs Conference, suggested if all the agencies and organizations involved pooled their resources it might be possible to get the job done. The survey was successfully completed in March (see article on page 2).

At the January meeting the group determined that moose hunting within the Innoko River drainage in Unit 21A has an important influence on moose and moose hunters in Unit 21E and recommended adding the entire Innoko drainage to the plan. Based on this recommendation the name of the planning effort was changed to the “Yukon-Innoko Moose Management Plan.” The new boundaries

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Photo by Teal Rogers

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Results of the winter 2005 moose population survey in Unit 21E **Page 2**

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Summary of the proposed recommendations and public comment form **See insert**



Working Group Develops Draft Recommendations

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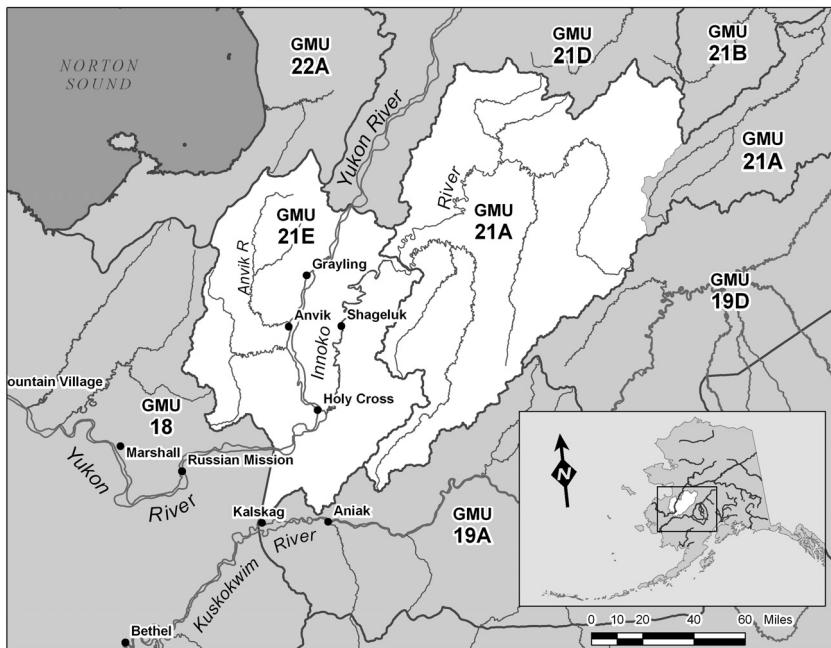
of the planning area are shown on the map below. Members of the Working Group agreed that a greater effort should be placed on informing and getting input from Unit 21A hunters and the McGrath Advisory Committee. Gwen White whose family operates Willow Air and transports hunters in Unit 21A expressed interest in participating in the plan-

ning process and was added to the Working Group at the meeting in Shageluk.

During the meetings in Shageluk and Anvik the Working Group continued reviewing information on the moose population, harvest levels, subsistence use and predation. The group agreed on draft recommendations for a mission, goals, objectives and alternatives to be included in a draft management plan.

A summary of the main recommendations being considered for inclusion in the draft plan and a public comment form are enclosed in this newsletter.

Please review this newsletter and return the enclosed public comment response form.



Yukon-Innoko moose management planning area.

The area covered by the plan is the lighter shaded area that includes Unit 21E and the portion on Unit 21A within the Innoko River drainage.

The Working Group is scheduled to meet in Holy Cross the first week of November to consider public comments and finalize their recommendations. Following any necessary changes, the draft management plan and any regulation proposals will be submitted to the Alaska Board of Game for consideration at their March 2006 meeting and then to the Federal Subsistence Board in May.

Results of the Winter 2005 Unit 21E Moose Population Estimation Survey by Beth Lenart, Acting McGrath Area Biologist

During February 25 through March 3, 2005, we did a spring moose survey in the part of Unit 21E, east of the Yukon River including the Yukon River and Innoko River. The survey area encompassed 5,070 square miles of the total 8,000 square miles in all of Unit 21E.

RESULTS OF SURVEY: We estimated 4673 moose ($\pm 17\%$) or an overall density estimate of 0.9 moose per square mile for the survey area. The last survey we conducted in February 2000 re-

sulted in an estimate was 5151 moose ($\pm 13\%$) with an overall density estimate of 1.0 moose per square mile. Statistically, we could not detect a difference in the moose population estimates between 2000 and 2005 surveys. However, members of the Working Group and others have reported that moose numbers have declined in the area. It is possible that during 2000 through 2005 the moose population declined slowly, but our methods could not de-

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tect the change. Furthermore, it is possible that moose were at a higher density in the early 1990s and have declined since then with the decline slowing down beginning in 2000. Distribution and moose movement may also have changed during the last 5 to 10 years.

Using the 2005 density estimate from the survey area, we estimate the moose population for all of Unit 21E at 7,000 to 9,000 moose.

Moose Survey Results

(In 5000 square mile portion of Unit 21E)

2000 Estimate

4483 – 5819 moose
or
1 moose per square mile
&
16% calves

2005 Estimate

3897 – 5448 moose
or
0.9 moose per square mile
&
18% calves

A Cooperative Effort:

The need for a new Unit 21E moose population survey was identified by the Yukon-Innoko Moose Management Working Group at the January 2005 meeting. The survey was a multi-agency cooperative effort made possible by the support of Innoko National Wildlife Refuge, Bureau of Land Management, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Association of Village Council Presidents, and the USFWS, Office of Subsistence Management.

HARVESTABLE SURPLUS: Using a conservative 5% harvest rate, we estimate that 350 to 450 bull moose can be taken each year in all of Unit 21E without causing the moose population to go down. Current harvest is about 360 moose per year and is within the range that is considered "sustainable." Still, other factors such as predation and flooding are important and we must continue to carefully monitor the moose population in the future.

Unit 21E Subsistence Survey Data Vital to the Planning Process

by Caroline Brown, Subsistence Specialist

Accurate harvest estimates are among the most basic and essential pieces of information needed for the sound management of wildlife populations. In Alaska, wildlife populations, especially big game, are important subsistence food resources and harvest data serve to document and monitor levels of subsistence use as required under the state subsistence law.

The Subsistence Division is now completing its 3rd year of harvest data collection in the villages of Grayling, Anvik, Holy Cross, and Shageluk in support of the Yukon-Innoko Moose Management Working Group. In order to provide the Working Group with harvest estimates over time, we average the harvest rates for years where we have survey data. In Unit 21E we have survey data from 1990, 2002, and 2003. According to the household surveys from these years, 21E hunters harvest an estimated average of 159 moose per year. For example, in 2002, surveys were completed with 89% of area households. Hunters in these communities

took an estimated 133 moose between April 2002 and March 2003. However, according to local residents, this number represents a decline in moose harvests from previous years as attested in a 1990-1991 harvest survey that estimated approximately 252 moose harvested by Unit 21E residents.

In order to estimate total subsistence harvest by Alaska residents, the average number of moose harvested by 21E hunters (159) is added to the average numbers of moose harvested by GMU 18 and 19 residents (127) and the numbers of moose taken by other Alaskan residents (41), for a total estimate of 327 moose harvested by Alaska residents from Unit 21E. The estimate of harvest by Alaskans who live outside of Unit 21E is based on data from green harvest reports returned by hunters from these areas.

Our thanks to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for providing funding for this research.



**Yukon-Innoko Moose Management
Working Group**
c/o Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation
1300 College Road
Fairbanks, AK 99701-1599

**To submit comments or ideas
or obtain further information,
contact:**

Randy Rogers, Wildlife Planner
ADF&G/DWC
1300 College Road
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone: 459-7335
randy_rogers@fishgame.state.ak.us

Beth Lenart, Assistant Area Biologist
ADF&G, Fairbanks
Phone: 459-7242
beth_lenart@fishgame.state.ak.us

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The Yukon-Innoko Moose Management Planning Committee needs your input. Please review this newsletter and return the enclosed public comment response form. Thank you!



Participants in the April 2005 meeting outside the Community Hall in Shageluk.

From left to right beginning in the back row: Steve Kovachs (FWS), Caroline Brown (ADF&G Subsistence), Bill Schaff (FWS), Ken Chase (Anvik), Jeff Denton (BLM), Steve Powers (Bethel), Robert Walker (Anvik), Earnest Demoski (Deloy-Ges), Mike Hoffman (Bethel), Jim Simon (ADF&G Subsistence), Roy Nowlin (ADF&G Wildlife Conservation), Arnold Hamilton (Shageluk) **Middle row:** Gabe Nicholai (Grayling), Leroy Peters (Holy Cross), Carl Jerue Jr. (Anvik), Gwen White (Willow). **Front row:** Beth Lenart (ADF&G, acting McGrath Area Biologist), Phillip Demientieff (TCC, Holy Cross), Polly Wheeler (FWS), James Charles (Tuntatuliak), Randy Rogers (ADF&G, Wildlife Conservation), and Bill Lyle (Wasilla).